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FOOTBALL THROUGH THE AGES

The football frenzy is upon us. But let us in the midst of this pandemonium call time. Let us pause for a moment of tranquil reflection. What is this great American game called football? What is its history? Its origin?

First of all, to call football an American game is somewhat misleading. True, the game is now played almost exclusively in America, but it comes to us from a land far away and a civilization long dead.

Football was first played in ancient Rome. Introduced by Julius Caesar, it became one of the most popular Roman sports by the time of Nero's reign. The eminent historian, Sigafoos, reports a crowd of MMCLDDXVIII people at the Colosseum one Saturday afternoon to see the Christians play the Lions.

With the decline of the Roman empire, football fell into disuse. The barbaric Huns and Visigoths preferred canasta. Not until the fifteenth century A.D. did football emerge from its twilight and rise to its rightful place in the firmament of European sports.

Which brings us to September 29, 1442, a date dear to the hearts of all football fans. It was on this date, according to the eminent historian Sigafoos, that a sixteen-year-old lad named Christopher Columbus tried out for the football team at Genoa Tech. He failed to make the team because he was too light. (He weighed at the time only twelve pounds.)

And why, you ask, is this date—September 29, 1442—so dear to the hearts of all football fans? Because young Columbus was so heartbroken at not making the team that he ran away to sea. And if that hadn't happened, he never would have discovered America. And if Columbus hadn't discovered America, the world would never have discovered tobacco. And if the world hadn't discovered tobacco, football fans never would have discovered Marlboro—which, as every fan knows, is the perfect companion to football. And why shouldn't it be? Look what Marlboro's got . . . Filter . . . Flavor . . . Flip-top Box . . . You can't buy a better smoke. You can't smoke a better buy.

The end of football in Europe came with the notorious "Black Sox Scandal" of 1587, in which Ed Machiavelli, one of the Pisa mob, paid off the University of Heidelberg Sabres to throw the championship game to the Chartres A. and M. Gophers. It was a mortal blow to football on the continent.

But the game took hold in the American colonies and thrived as it had never thrived before. Which brings us to another date that remains evergreen in the hearts of football lovers: December 16, 1773.

On that date a British packet loaded with tea sailed into Boston harbor. The colonies had long been smarting under the English king's tax on tea. "Taxation without representation," they called it, and feelings ran high.

When on December 16, 1773, the British ship docked at Boston, a semi-pro football team called the Nonpareil Tigers, coached by Samuel (Swifty) Adams, was scrimmaging near the harbor. "Come, lads," cried Swifty, seeing the ship. "Let's dump the tea in the ocean!"

With many a laugh and cheer the Nonpareil Tigers followed Swifty aboard and proceeded to dump the cargo overboard in a wild, disorganized and abandoned manner. "Here now!" called Swifty sharply. "That's no way to dump tea overboard. Let's get into some kind of formation."

And that, fans, is how the tea formation was born.

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